

Executive Update



A special update for Idaho conservation leaders ♦ Summer 2005

Crapo Speaks at Nelson Angus Ranch Event

Idaho's U.S. Senator Mike Crapo spoke in support of the Conservation Security Program (CSP) at an event Aug. 3 in Salmon.



Senator Mike Crapo in Salmon

Steve Herbst and his family of the Nelson Angus Ranch hosted the event. Local ranchers, their families and conservation agency staff attended.

"I'd like to extend a big thank you to all the private property owners," Crapo said. "Idaho leads the nation in conservation and stewardship."

Crapo, who serves as chairman of the Senate Agriculture Subcommittee on Forestry, Conservation and Rural Revitalization, said the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) and CSP are important programs for accomplishing conservation now and in the future.

He said, in a time of tight budget constraints, he still foresees the fund-

Special Feature Rural Economy Gets a Boost with CSP

As many as 337 Idaho farmers and ranchers in 15 watersheds across the state are approved for the new Conservation Security Program (CSP) this year.

In total, these producers—considered some of the best land stewards in the state—could receive \$4.2 million in 2005 alone.

"This is a testament to the quality of producers here in Idaho," says **Adolfo Perez**, NRCS acting state conservationist. "We hope this will provide a boost to the state's rural economies and inspire other farmers and ranchers to practice good stewardship."

CSP differs from traditional NRCS programs because it rewards existing conservation practices. The criteria for acceptance is strict.

"This is not a fix-it program," says **Richard Spencer**, NRCS district conservationist in Grangeville. "This is a program

which offers rewards for people who are already doing a good job conserving their soil and water."

NRCS offered 2005 CSP in watersheds near Arco, Bonners Ferry, Cascade, Grangeville, Mountain Home and St. Anthony. CSP will be rotated through all the state's watersheds within eight years. The 2006 watersheds are expected to be announced soon.

2005 CSP Payments—Idaho

Total: 337 contracts for \$4.26 million

Arco: 54 contracts, \$1.1 million

Bonners Ferry: 22 contracts, \$357,000

Cascade/Weiser: 15 contracts, \$166,000

Grangeville: 153 contracts, \$1.64 million

Mountain Home: 5 contracts, \$97,000

St. Anthony: 77 contracts, \$659,000

Note: These numbers are a projection and could change based on fund availability and whether all approved applicants sign their contracts.

ing for conservation programs in the next Farm Bill to remain about the same.

"I think we'll keep CSP and all the other conservation programs," he said. "The question will be the allocation of resources among them."

(right) Steve Herbst of Nelson Angus Ranch works with Barry Albert, NRCS district conservationist in Salmon, to sign his CSP contract.



Natural Resources Conservation Service
9173 W. Barnes Drive, Suite C
Boise, ID 83709
www.id.nrcs.usda.gov

Richard Sims
State Conservationist
(208) 378-5700

Jody Fagan
Public Affairs Specialist
(208) 685-6978

Minidoka Celebrates Final Well Closing

Water in the Snake River aquifer is a lot cleaner now thanks to a massive project wrapping up this summer.

The more than \$4 million A&B Irrigation Project closes 79 injection, or drain wells, near Rupert.



Adolfo Perez, NRCS acting state conservationist, and Patrick Evans, Rupert district conservationist, discuss the project.

“We’re pleased to have 87 producers participating to convert more than 10,000 acres from gravity irrigation to sprinklers,” says **Jim McCall**, Minidoka Soil and Water Conservation District (SWCD)

supervisor.

It is reason to celebrate for the SWCD, who spearheaded the project. A bus tour and celebration held in July took 50 participants to view the work done.

Money specifically set aside by Congress for this project allowed A&B Irrigation to seal off the wells. Money administered through NRCS assisted the landowners to convert from flood irrigation to sprinkler.

Julie Thomas, Resource Conservation and Development (RC&D) coordinator in Twin Falls, wrote the grant. **Congressman Mike Simpson** helped get the major earmark approved.

The celebration of the well closures also marked the Minidoka SWCD’s 50th anniversary. Area landowner **Harold Cavener** appreciates the help.

“It’s doubtful we could have done this work without cost-share,” he says.

The icing on the cake is the 10 percent or more Cavener claims he’s saving on his water usage.

Statistics: Farm Bill Contracts for 2005

Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP)

- ◆ \$14.1 million in 431 contracts to date
- ◆ \$1.5 million yet to contract

Wildlife Habitat Incentives Program (WHIP)

- ◆ 27 contracts for \$768,000
- ◆ \$322,000 toward salmon projects
- ◆ \$55,000 toward sage grouse projects

Grasslands Reserve Program (GRP)

- ◆ 3 permanent easement contracts for \$1.1 million

Wetlands Reserve Program (WRP)

- ◆ 1 large restoration for \$581,000

Conservation Program Helps Reduce Farmer Risk

Eric Odberg admits when he started direct seeding his canyon-rim ground he didn’t really know what he was doing.

With the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) and the knowledge of a neighbor, Odberg has transitioned to direct seeding and has seen the quality of his ground increase.

He hasn’t done specific soil quality tests, he says, but worms are plentiful and yields are as high, if not higher, than they were before the change seven years ago.

Odberg, 35, is a fourth-generation farmer on the family’s ground south of Genesee.

Odberg was eyeing the work of neighbor Russ Zenner when he tiptoed into direct seeding with a 90-acre piece on the canyon edge.

“It was my best ground,” he says.

The maiden voyage seemed less risky, he says, with the assistance of EQIP. After three years, he boosted his enrollment to 400 acres.

The extra income also allowed him to invest in a low-disturbance disk opener drill. This replaced the two-pass system he was using.

Yields dropped slightly when he started direct seeding but they have since gone back up. He has also seen the wet spots dry up.

“I feel I can get out on the ground as early as conventional guys.”

Odberg is involved in the Pacific Northwest Direct Seed Association

and the Clearwater Direct Seeders, which are both made up of growers and industry people working together to promote direct seeding.



Direct-seed farmer Eric Odberg.

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